

# You're from Where?

*by Richard A. Forrant*

*Well, Michael, here it is! My story about a 'lil kid growing up in an inconspicuous mill town of some 7000 +/- residents. Thought I would have more pictures and/or newspaper clippings but there are none. Searched everywhere. Better than nothing!*

You're from where? **W-A-R-E!** All through college and on my first few career positions, the same question - same answer! **Ware! Massachusetts!**

At 2:36 a.m., Wednesday, July 22, 1942, I took my first breaths at Mary Lane Hospital in Ware. Hurray – Mom and I made it! Here comes my first pierogi (cabbage wrapped in a thin dough shaped like a crescent roll, steamed and drenched in melted butter) and golumpki (hamburg/pork/rice mixture wrapped in a cabbage leaf, baked). Well maybe not that first day, but soon to be enjoyed multiple times followed up by the best apple pie ever. All prepared from scratch without looking at a recipe. Oh, how do I regret not getting the recipe from Mom and Aunt Sophie (probably wouldn't come out close anyway).

Playing with wooden alphabet blocks, Lincoln logs and wind-up trains, my early years were underway.

## **Education:**

At age five, Mom enrolled me at Mrs. Potter's Nursery in Ware. Remember circling the flag pole on flag day with fellow students and especially Margaret Callahan, a co enrollee, digging a hole in the soil to reach China – her dad was in the Merchant Marines; she was trying to reach him!

That was the start of my education. Soon thereafter, I was enrolled in elementary schools in Ware. By the time I reached 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> grade, I became a big talker during class and suffered the penalty by having to write 50 times "I will not talk in class".

Started high school in 1956 (no sports, just academics) graduating in 1960 2<sup>nd</sup> in my class (1<sup>st</sup> honors business course) behind the college honors student.

Looking to college, I chose Northampton Commercial College (learning it was my Aunt Dorothy's alma mater) majoring in accounting and became senior class president. Prior to college, I did not have a car – Mom and Uncle Steve (Aunt Sophie's husband) took me to a local Pontiac dealer where we "ordered" a 1960 Pontiac Tempest. On delivery day, Mom walked into and out of her bedroom and handed me an envelope containing \$3,200 cash to pay for the car. What a saver she was and also paid the tuition for NCC and for American International College (later). All this while working as a spinner at Hampshire Woolen Mill in Ware.

Upon college graduation, realized that I needed a four year degree and transferred my credits to American International College in Springfield, MA. I struggled there but did graduate in 1964 with a BSBA degree, accounting major.

Enlisted immediately upon graduation in the Massachusetts Army National Guard (Vietnam was booming, the draft was still in place). Basic training was at Fort Dix, NJ and advanced infantry training at Fort Polk, LA (the heat and red clay wicked).

After returning from six months basic training, I enrolled at Western New England, Wilbraham, MA, evenings for three years receiving an MBA in 1968.

### **Career work after college:**

After basic training, I returned to Ware and interviewed for an entry level accounting job at Parsons Paper Company in Holyoke, MA (\$5,200 salary - wow!) in 1965.

Got several promotions elevating to plant accountant. And this is where I met Joyce, my first spouse to whom I got married in 1966; divorced in 1978 after having four children.

In the interim of '66 to '68, left Parsons feeling there was no future or further challenge and secured an accounting position with Scott Graphics in So Hadley, MA (division of Scott Paper) where I remained for some 4-5 years advancing to Division Accountant. Was being considered for a position within Scott Paper in PA but Joyce did not want to relocate – writing was on the wall but I couldn't read it.

Left Scott Graphics for position with Great Atlantic and Pacific food chain in Springfield, MA advancing to Assistant Controller, NE region and to several other companies thereafter. In the 1980's, the economic picture was grim – I was terminated in round #3 from Veeder-Root in Hartford, CT and out of work for 15 months – "great experience but asking for too much". You really question yourself during times like that but I endured.

Later, in 1988, I joined M & R Liquors, a retail liquor chain of six stores where I served as senior accountant for 17 years retiring at age 65. A family owned business, advancement was impossible but I was becoming too old to look for a new position so I stuck it out until 2005.

### **Growing up in Ware:**

My one sibling, Allan, was born 5 years later than I (he passed in 2011 at age 64 due to bone cancer resulting from prostate cancer that was not detected and/or not treated soon enough). Never got the right explanation from his family.

As "kids", Allan and I had a uncomplicated childhood. Being five

years older, I already had my first job at The Ware River News when I was 14 (\$1/hour!) where I worked some afternoons and full time in summer. I felt so important when I got my driver's license and drove the boss' station wagon to deliver the monthly Polish church bulletins. The drive was only four miles round trip but it was great!

My second job after the Ware River News was at Friendly Ice Cream (a New England corporation) where I evolved to shift supervisor. Friendly's has many retail outlets in New



Christmas Dinner, 1954: my brother Allan is barely seen at far left, next to my father Arthur; then my mother Anna, me, Uncle Steve Tokarz, Aunt Sophie. My father never smiled - isn't that sad?

England - their ice creams sold in many grocery stores throughout the North East.

While growing up, Allan and I enjoyed playing Monopoly sometimes in all day tournaments, building snow forts and having snowball fights in the winter, car trips to Kings Department Store and Johnsons Book Store in Springfield with Mom, Aunt Sophie and Uncle Steve to shop, browse, etc. especially checking out the model train displays at holiday time.

Uncle Steve built us a train table upon which we proudly displayed our Lionel train, adding on when we could from our shopping at Johnson's Book Store from our few earned dollars and gifts.

Of my father, I have extremely few memories – he was a salesman for Metropolitan Life. My brother and I would expect an allowance from him each Friday of 10 cents – he never had the change. He beat my mother when I was small; I remember seeing her badly bruised. When they divorced, I would go to his apartment for the child support. He lived with a Joe Bouvier and I remember seeing his girl friend sitting back in the apartment. Nothing good, I am afraid.

Allan and I shoveled some neighbor's walks for a few bucks a storm; mowed two lawns. All the pain and suffering for so little but we were just kids and the few dollars seemed like a lot!

### **Big moments growing up!**

Allan and I enjoyed going to J.J. Newberry's and W.T. Grant in Ware to check out the toys. Grants had the best in-store-cooked hot Spanish peanuts ever. The Cushman Bakery truck stopped at our house about twice a month – their brownies were to die for. And, the Polish bakery in Ware had the very best Polish bread. Aunt Sophie and Mom knew when the ovens were going to open and yield the fresh baked treats. I would walk to Main St, take the short cut through store fronts and arrive at the bakery to purchase a loaf. Fresh sliced, we enjoyed it with "Blue Bonnet on it" followed by a glass of ice cold pasteurized milk delivered to our home in glass bottles left in an insulated aluminum container.

Other treats included:

... buying a quart of awesome chocolate milk which came in a glass bottle from the Dumas' Dairy truck delivering next door; and,

... a plate of just fresh steamed green beans with bread crumbs for lunch, nothing else during the growing season; and

... a plate of fresh mashed potatoes with a buttermilk chaser. YUM! Aunt Sophie, that was her specialty, ensured that the potatoes were lump free.

**Diane!** We met in 1980; married in 1982. She also had been married previously, having a daughter, Casey, whom I adopted. Going strong after 36 years - a great team!

### **Income taxes:**

Started preparing taxes while in the National Guard driving to Hadley, MA working for John Reggish (small accounting firm) for \$8/hour. I soon realized that I could do this and could do better on my own. Returns were still hand prepared – computer prepared, e-filing nowhere in sight. I remember Schedule G (income averaging over 5 years) and when finding an error upon rechecking a return, all the work involved with "whiting out" the erroneous numbers.

Over the years, I prepared tax returns each evening and all day over the weekend. This is while driving to the client's homes (eventually with a laptop – big time).

The year that I retired from M&R, my clientele list exploded and soon thereafter, I had to ask clients to come to my home but still went to the homes of several more complicated clients.

The last few years, prior to having my practice acquired by Don Brooks and Associates in 2017, I worked seven days a week from home, 11 weeks in all. My fees were very reasonable as my overhead was nonexistent. Diane was my right hand not asking for any compensation, but ... she made up the deposits! Just kidding!

Our clients became friends and extended family which we miss some dearly, but it was time to retire.

And WARE do I live in retirement? No way! I'm in Connecticut!



### CAN YOU ID THIS PHOTO?

WARE - Tracy Gafney is wondering if residents could help her identify those not listed below in this photo. Email the editor with your suggestions at tkane@turley.com.

Top row from the left: Richard Forrant, John Desmond, 3rd-unknown, 4th unknown, 5th- Walter Kaminski?, 6th- ?7th-Lived on Bank street and was wounded in Veitnam, 8th- ? 9th -Mickey Baker  
Middle Row 2nd Lester Brook  
Bottom Row left 1st-Shirley Demers, 2nd Nora Tracy Gafney, 8th- Diane Pulansky

**High Street Elementary School, Ware, MA, c. 1948.** Richard Forrant is top row, far left. This is either 1<sup>st</sup> Grade (1948) or 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade (1949). Marian Sanford was the 1<sup>st</sup> Grade teacher; Miss Emerson was 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade. Old Mr. Woods, the custodian, would fill the ink wells on the desk with his long-spouted pitcher. The bathroom was in the cellar and all the kids had to go home for lunch. Richard's class was the last to attend this school; this class later graduated from Ware High School in 1960. The boys played on one side of the crushed stone playground that bordered High Street, and the girls on the other. Like the kid in *Christmas Story*, Pete Lincoln [not pictured] actually got his tongue stuck to the metal fence out front after being dared to lick it by some 4<sup>th</sup> Grade terrorists! [source: Ware River News; clipping in possession of R.A. Forrant]

### FindAGrave.com memorials:

142950864 Allan Michael Forrant (1947-2011)

75206471 Anna Anelia Swirk Forrant (1914-2001)

